158. Disabilities of the Travancore Pulayas.

Mr. Aiyan Kali (Member, Nominated) said that, though the Government had done much for the Pulayas in the wake of education, there were several difficulties in the way of their taking full advantage of the concessions granted to them. But for the unsympathetic treatment experienced by the Pulayas at the hand of Head Masters and Inspectors of Schools, there would have been better educational progress among the community.

He added that, if sufficient training was given to the members of the community in industrial matters, it would be productive of much good to the State. They should be given a scientific training in agriculture and other cottage industries. For that purpose the Member prayed that a number of scholarships should be granted to the Pulaya boys from the State.

In spite of the Government orders on the subject, the community experienced difficulties in getting access to public places. The officers of the Government were not rendering any assistance to them. The Member prayed that more sympathy might be shown to them in that direction.

Finally, the Member thanked the Government for the various acts of kindness done by them to better the condition of the Pulayas and other depressed classes.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

159. Suggestions for modifying the constitution of the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.

Mr. E. K. Velayudhan Pillai, B. A., B. L. (Member, Kartikappalli taluk) said that the Assembly had been in existence for over 12 years and had a brilliant record of useful work. Successive Dewans had complimented the Members on their public spirit and patriotism, their sobriety of thought and moderation of language. Thus, by the exercise of the privilege conferred on the Members in a spirit of fairness and moderation, the Assembly had entitled itself to a real participation in the administration of public affairs. Further, in the present year, the Assembly had arrived at a critical stage of its existence. The public interest manifested in the proceedings of the Assembly on the score of its novelty in the earlier years of its existence was fast disappearing, and in its place was gradually growing up in the public mind a serious doubt as to its practical utility. The Assembly was declared to be a highly costly substitute for the older method of presenting petitions to the Head of the Government for redress of grievances. There was another version that the Assembly was an expensive annual pageant got up for the amusement of the Trivandrum public, both official and non-official, and not a public body seriously intended for the deliberation of public questions. The Member's proposal for the revival of public confidence in the Assembly was simple and only involved the adoption of a few changes in the constitution and functions of the Assembly.

In the first place, the Member suggested that all the Heads of Departments should actively participate in the proceedings of the Assembly. They had hitherto been interested spectators and not actual players. The exchange of a few questions, under the immediate supervision of the President, between the Government officers responsible for the conduct of public affairs and the accredited representatives of the people, would, in the Member's opinion, be an innovation wholesome to all parties and one that was heartily wished for. The change would give an air of reality to the proceedings of the Assembly and would also considerably enhance its dignity.

The Member's second proposal aimed at a desirable increase in the number of opportunities for such exchange of views between the representatives of the Government and of the people. He proposed that the Assembly should meet twice in the year, the birth-day session in the month of Kanni being added to the present session. The Members once elected should be allowed to hold their seats for three years consecutively without re-election.

Dewan.—Do you think that the people will like it ?

Member.—Yes, Sir.

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The interval between the annual sessions was too long and the length of one such session was too short to enable the Members to bestow close attention to many matters intimately connected with the future welfare of the people. The third and last point in the Member's representation was the necessity for conceding to the Members of the Assembly the right of interpellation and the right of moving resolutions on matters of public importance.

Dewan.—Would you not have that power conferred on the Legislative Council?

Member.—I should prefer to have it conferred on the Assembly.

Continuing, he said that the concession might be granted subject to the conditions and limitations imposed in British India. The claim of the people was that they should be placed on a footing of equality with the inhabitants of British India in regard to such privileges. The demand, he thought, was, by no means, extravagant, as the people here were not unfit for privileges which, with generosity, had been conferred upon the people of British India long ago. The Member requested that the existing practice of hearing the representations and then consulting the officials on the spot should be abandoned.

His suggestion was that the representations should be moved by the Members in the form of resolutions and they should be seconded and supported and freely discussed and voted upon by the whole Assembly. To the Members, the educative value of the proposed measure would be immense. Under the existing system, no Member had a motive to understand his neighbour's grievances. There was no corporate aim and no corporate sympathy, no collective spirit and no collective responsibility. The proposed change would lead to a lively and intellectual co-operation of the Members in the work of the Assembly. The Government would also be a distinct gainer. For one thing, the prospect of a free discussion and immediate official refutation would induce the popular representatives to exclude fantastic grievances from their programme. For another, the decision for or against a proposition arrived at by a majority of the Assembly might be taken as conclusive with respect to that proposition. The time now laboriously spent by the Head of the administration in the consideration of the representations of the Assembly at each session might be saved and profitably utilised for other purposes. With reference to the right of interpellation, the Member said that the right would be only sparingly used by the Members and that it was only an invaluable safeguard in the hands of the people against the wanton disregard of popular opinion.

In conclusion, the Member said that any reasonable reduction in the numerical strength of the Assembly would be gladly assented to by the people, in return for the wholesale acceptance by the Government of the above or similar proposals for the conversion of the Assembly into a really deliberative body.

Mr. Cheriyan Verghese (Member, Trading Classes, Changanachery) said that he had nothing to represent in addition to what the previous speaker had said. He then presented his memorandum which contained the following proposals:—

(1) The rules for the election of Members to the Assembly should be so modified as to increase the number of qualified voters among the Christians and other Makkathayees.

(2) There should be at least one Christian Member from the Christian population of the Changanachery taluk. If no Christian Member was returned by the taluk voters, the Government should make other arrangements to elect a Christian Member. It would be sufficient, if one Christian Member was nominated by the Government from the Changanachery taluk every year.

Mr. P. M. Ismail Munavery (Member, Nominated) said that, though it was 13 years since the Assembly was inaugurated, there had not been a single instance of any Mahomedan being elected as a Member of the Assembly by the taluk voters. Such Mahomedan gentlemen as were fortunate enough to sit in the Assembly had to come in through nomination by the Government or election by the Town

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Improvement Committees. The community felt their position keenly. They desired that their members should come in as a matter of right and not as a favour. For more reasons than one, it would not be possible for Mahomedans to get elected as Members by the general voters of the taluks. The Mahomedan voters were very limited and as such their candidates could not afford to compete successfully with candidates from other communities, merely on the strength of communal voting. There were also not many Mahomedans in the country who could command the influence to get them returned by a mixed electorate.

Dewan.—Do you know whether any Mahomedan gentleman actually stood for election and failed ?

Member.—I cannot give specific instances.

The Member, therefore, prayed that the Government might be pleased to grant to the Mahomedans a separate electorate as was granted to the Jenmis of Travancore and the Planters. The Padmanabhapuram and Devicolam Divisions might be given a separate electorate each and the other three Divisions two electoral circles each. The arrangement would ensure the return of 8 Mahomedan Members to the Assembly as a matter of right. The difficulty of the Government in selecting half the number every year from all the Divisions for nomination as Mahomedan Members would also be obviated. The Member added that the minority sections of the Hindu or Christian communities could not reasonably complain against the above concession as their members were being elected by the taluk voters every year.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

160. Concessions for the people from the Government.

Mr. K. M. Mathula Mappila (Member, T. I. C., Kottayam) said that the necessity for easy means of communication was keenly felt by the people. Year after year, representations were being made by the Members, especially of the central and northern taluks of Travancore for affording facilities of easy communication. The Government had not taken any active steps on such representations. In fairness to the Government, it must be said that to undertake all the public works desired by the Members was an utter impossibility. The whole of the State revenue might not suffice for completing all the works wanted by the several Members. The Government were not, therefore, to be blamed for the apparent indifference in the matter. The clamour for more public works was, however, growing day by day. It was, therefore, high time that the question was successfully tackled.

The Member then made the following suggestions for adoption to meet the above situation :—

(1) For meeting local needs, responsible Associations or Boards should be formed in each *pakuthi*.

(2) Such Boards should be authorised to levy a small cess under certain items with the sanction of the Government.

(3) The Government should help such Boards by granting contributions to the extent of the amount realised by them as local cess or double that amount.

(4) Taluk Boards should be formed with the representatives of the *pakuthi* Boards as members.

(5) Division Boards should also be established with the representatives of Taluk Boards as members.

(6) The power to levy cess should be vested only in the *pakuthi* Boards.

(7) Matters affecting the Taluks and Divisions should be freely discussed in the Taluk and Division Boards. The required funds for the same should be contributed by the *pakuthi* Boards.

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